EXTRACTS

FROM

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Professor ROBISON's

"PROOFS OF A CONSPIRACY," &c.

WITH

BRIEF REFLECTIONS

ON THE

CHARGES he has exhibited, the EVIDENCE he has produced, and the MERIT of his Performance.

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EXTRACTS, &c.

THE high eſtimation in which Profeſſor Robiſon's "Proofs of a Conſpiracy," &c. is held in ſome parts of the United States, has induced the writer of the following extracts and obſervations, to give it a careful peruſal, and to endeavor candidly to aſcertain the principles and objects, as well of the author, as alſo, of the French Revolution and the German Union, as ſtated by this learned gentleman.

Had it not been for the unuſual ardor and zeal that appears in a certain deſcription of men to improve the matters contained in this book for the purpoſe of alarming the minds of our citizens, and affecting the principles of our own government, the following ſtrictures would never have been made upon it; and probably, little notice would ever have been taken of it in this country.

In p. 15, Mr. Robiſon ſays,—"I have ſeen that the moſt active leaders in the French Revolution were members of this Aſſociation, and conducted their *firſt movements* according

to its principles, and by means of its inſtructions and aſſiſtance, formally requeſted and obtained." P. 278. "Their officers and ſoldiers, who returned from America, imported the *American principles*, and in every company found hearers who liſtened with delight and regret to their *faſcinating tale* of *American independence*.—All wiſhed for a taſte of that Liberty and Equality which they were allowed to applaud on the ſtage.—To import this *dangerous delicacy of American growth*, France had expended many millions, and drowned herſelf in debts."

According to Mr. Robiſon then, whatever may have been the moral characters of ſome individuals (and, to be ſure, from his repreſentation of them, they appear to have been bad enough) yet, the principles of the Aſſociation were the ſame that dictated the *American*, and influenced the *Firſt Movements* of the French Revolution. I have met with but very few, if any, American Citizens, who do not *profeſs* to approve of the *Firſt Movements* of the French Revolution, although many parts of their ſubſequent conduct are reprobated by all. And to thoſe who ſtill adhere to thoſe *American principles*, it is matter of ſerious concern to hear from various quarters, and even from the ſacred deſk, the unbounded and high encomiums, which, from time to time, are laviſhed on Profeſſor Robiſon's "Proofs of a Conſpiracy againſt all the Religions and Governments of Europe."

If we attend to the deſcription which this learned gentleman has given of the ſtate of thoſe governments and religions, the ſubverſion of which, as he aſſerts, has been contemplated by the Aſſociation, we may form a better eſtimation of the object and merit of his performance.

In p. 31, ſpeaking of the "univerſal ſuperſtition and falſehood" which obtained in the eſtabliſhed religion of France, he ſays, "And it muſt be acknowledged that little elſe was to be ſeen in the eſtabliſhed religion of the kingdom. The people found nothing in Chriſtianity but a never-ceaſing round of inſignificant and troubleſome ceremonies, which conſumed their time, and furniſhed a fund for ſupporting a ſet of lordly and oppreſſive dignitaries, who declared in the plaineſt manner their own diſbelief of their religion by their total diſregard of common decency, by their continual reſidence at court, and by abſolute neglect, and even the moſt haughty and oppreſſive treatment, of the only part of their order that took any concern about the religious ſentiments of the nation, namely, the Cures, or pariſh prieſts. The Monks appeared only as lazy drones."

P. 32. "And it is remarkable that in all licentious writings, and bitter ſatirical tales of the philoſophical free-thinkers, ſuch as Voltaire, who never fails to have a taunting hit at the Clergy, the Cure is generally an amia-

ble perſonage, a charitable man, and friend to the poor and unfortunate, a peace-maker, and a man of piety and worth. Yet theſe men were kept in a ſtate of the moſt ſlaviſh and cruel ſubjection by the higher orders of the Clergy, and all hopes of advancement cut off, Rarely, hardly ever does it happen, that a Cure becomes a Biſhop. The Abbies ſtep in to every line of preferment."

From this juſt conceſſion, inadvertently made, I aſk, Who appears to be the moſt unfriendly to virtue and real piety? Are they thoſe licentious and philoſophical free-thinkers, who, while they give all due praiſe and encouragement to whatever is commendable and praiſeworthy in the clergy, are, at the ſame time, for ſubverting eſtabliſhments ſo oppreſſive and corrupt? or are they thoſe who treat it as the height of irreligion and atheiſm to attempt it?

In p. 51, ſpeaking of Prieſtcraft, he ſays, "Even the rulers forget their intereſt, which *ſhould lead them to ſupport it.*"—As a flagrant inſtance of the licentious principles and conduct of the Aſſociation, he ſays, p. 74, "After flatly denying that the Prince of any country had the ſmalleſt right to preſcribe, or even direct the faith of his ſubjects, they extended their diſcuſſions to the rights of Princes in general!!" Another inſtance not at all inferior to this, of the licentiouſneſs, and awful impiety of the principles and conduct of the Aſſociation, is ſtated, p. 105. "A correſpond-

ence was discovered," says he, "in which it is plain, that by their influence, *one of the greatest ecclesiastical dignities was filled up in opposition to the right and authority of the Archbishop of Spire!!*"—Cases like these, some years ago, would not have alarmed the citizens, nor even most of the clergy of the United States of America.—But the times are changed.

P. 278, 279. "The mad prodigality of the Royal Family and the Court had drained the treasury, and forestalled every livre of the revenue. The edicts for new taxes were most unwelcome and oppressive.—In fact, the King of France was an absolute Monarch, and the people were slaves."—Such, both in Church and State, according to Mr. Robison, was the situation of things in France, previous to the Revolution. The oppressions that were exercised in Germany were not far different from those in France. Such are the Governments and Religions which this admired author is labouring to support, and for the defence of which he has written and published his Book. For the people in concert, to attempt a subversion of establishments like these, or to reform such abuses in Church and State, or even to devise the means by which such reformation might be effected, seems, in the opinion of this learned Professor, to be no other than a "Conspiracy against all the Religions and Governments of Europe."

That those of our citizens, our Clergy in

particular, who profeſs to be of that denomination of Chriſtians who are called *Independents*, ſhould, with ſuch avidity, ſwallow Mr. Robiſon's ideas of eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhments, is no leſs remarkable, than that thoſe who profeſs to be *American Federaliſts*, ſhould be pleaſed with his ſentiments of Civil Government: For he is equally ſevere againſt both theſe deſcriptions of men. He ſays, p. 370, "As I can find nothing but quarrels and ill-will among *Independents*, I ſhould be ſorry to have any of our eſtabliſhments deſtroyed, and am therefore apprehenſive of ſome danger from the zealous ſpreading of ſuch doctrines, eſpecially as they make it equally neceſſary to admit the preaching up no religion, and no civil eſtabliſhment whatever."—Have our Clergy, under our preſent government, contracted an itch to get into the ſaddle, and, as the phraſe is, *to ride the high horſe* along ſide of their brethren in ſome other parts of the world? Some of them, at leaſt, have exhibited either a meanneſs of ſpirit which perfectly coincides with ſuch a diſpoſition, or a degree of humility and lowlineſs of mind that has hardly been equalled, even in the beſt of times. For, while reproach and contempt are caſt upon the whole denomination to which they belong, they, on their part, cry, *Truth, Lord!* and extol the man, and bleſs the mouth that utters the inſolent and degrading charge againſt them.

I will not take upon me to inſtruct thoſe whoſe ſpecial province it is to inſtruct others *in things which make for peace, and things whereby one may edify another.* But, I have often thought, that ſome of our Clergy who put themſelves forward as the political Champions of the day, make nearly the ſame figure, as Politicians, which Thomas Paine does, as a Divine. Had they both, in their public performances, confined themſelves more to ſubjects which they better underſtood, it might have been more happy for the people at large: it would certainly have been much more reputable for themſelves. Mr. Paine, by his writings on *Civil Government and the Rights of Men*, had acquired a high reputation, both in Europe and America. But when he undertook to diſcuſs the ſubject of *Divine Revelation*, he became, in this capacity, an object of juſt abhorrence, pity, and contempt. He appears to be little more than a rude and inſolent retailer of the principles of his predeceſſors in infidelity, who had paid a more decent and accurate attention to the ſubject, than he ſeems to have done. He has betrayed an uncommon rancor of ſpirit, and the moſt palpable ignorance of his ſubject, and even of the nature of the evidence on which Believers ground their faith in Divine Revelation. What he wants of information and argument, he abundantly ſupplies with inſolence and ill manners. But my buſineſs here is not with

Mr. Paine; nor need I make a particular application of this remark.—That men habituated either to civil or military office, ſhould contract a luſt for unbounded power, is not a novelty in human life; however unprecedented it may ſeem to be, for the Clergy to indulge a wiſh to participate with them in their prey. *But Jeſhurun*, having been fed with *butter of kine, and the fat of lambs, with the fat of kidneys of wheat, and having drank the pure blood of the grape,—Jeſhurun waxed fat and kicked.*

Liberty of conſcience, and an original equality of civil rights, ſo far as I underſtand Mr. Robiſon, were what he conſiders, the great and faſcinating objects of the Revolution. I have never yet met with a man who profeſſed to wiſh for any other kind of *Equality*, in Church or State, than this, in oppoſition to ſuch Eccleſiaſtical Eſtabliſhments, Privileged Orders, and Hereditary Rights and Offices, as obtained in France previous to the Revolution, and ſuch as ſtill obtain in moſt of the ancient and deſpotic governments of Europe. This Liberty of Conſcience, and Equality of Rights, is the *Liberty* and *Equality* which has ſo offended and alarmed Mr. Robiſon, and which his Eulogiſts in America, if they fully underſtand him, muſt now be exerting themſelves to eradicate from the United States. Let this once be effected, and a man of this deſcription will have attained the ultimate ob-

ject of his desire. With the feelings of this admired author, as expressed, p. 341, "He will find himself imperceptibly set down in the *British Parliament of King, Lords, and Commons*;—while the rest of the nation are sitting, each under his own Fig-tree, and there is none to make him afraid."—The body of the people being once reduced to this torpid state, and feeling to themselves that they have no concern with the affairs of government, nor with the conduct of their rulers, will place a blind and implicit confidence in the Administration, and quietly submit to every burden that may be laid upon them. This will be a state similar to that which the Professor has so well described, as what obtained in France and Germany, previous to the Revolution. These, so long as they shall last, will be halcyon days indeed to all the admirers of Professor Robison's *Proofs*. It ought, however, to be remembered that it has often happened, and may do so again, that such a torpid state has only been portentous of those tremendous scenes which have convulsed nations, drenched the world in blood, and buried Empires in perdition.

The principles which this learned Professor so highly reprobates throughout his Book, are nevertheless abundantly recognized by the Constitution of the United States, and as I conceive, by the Constitutions and laws of all the States in the Union. In the 9th Sect. of

the 1ſt Art. of the Conſtitution, it is provided that "No title of Nobility ſhall be granted by the United States." Art. 2. Sect. 6. "No religious teſt ſhall ever be required as a qualification to an office of public truſt under the United States." Art. 3. of the Amendments. "Congreſs ſhall make no law reſpecting an eſtabliſhment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of ſpeech, or of the preſs; or the right of the people peaceably to aſſemble, and to petition the government for a redreſs of grievances." In the firſt Article of the Declaration of the Rights of the inhabitants of the Commonwealth of Maſſachuſetts, it is declared, "All men are born EQUAL and FREE." Art. 3. "No ſubordination of any one ſect or denomination to another ſhall ever be eſtabliſhed by law." Art. 6. "No man, nor corporation, or aſſociation of men, have any other title to obtain advantages, or particular and excluſive privileges diſtinct from thoſe of the community, than what ariſes from the conſideration of ſervices rendered to the public; and this title being in nature neither hereditary, nor tranſmiſſible to children, or deſcendants or relations by blood, the idea of a man born a magiſtrate, law-giver, or judge, is abſurd and unnatural."—It would be ſuperfluous in me to attempt, in a formal manner, to vindicate principles ſanctioned like theſe, moſt of which need only to be underſtood, in

order to captivate every mind which is not blinded by prejudice, or filled with depravity, which rational argument can never reach. Let the treaſures that have been expended, the toils that have been undergone, and the torrents of American blood that have been ſhed to eſtabliſh theſe principles, all witneſs in favor of them. And how widely ſoever Profeſſor Robiſon may differ from the Conſtitutional Federaliſts and genuine Republicans of the United States in other matters, he is undoubtedly right in this, That theſe principles, which he and his admirers ſo heartily deteſt, are "*American Principles*," and what he terms, "fretful extravagancies of the Americans," are indeed "*Delicacies of American Growth.*"

Mr. Robiſon's great object in publiſhing his *Proofs*, ſeems to be ſuggeſted in his Dedication to the Right Honorable William Wyndham, where he ſays, "It was with great ſatisfaction that I learned from a friend, that you coincided with me in opinion, that the information contained in this performance *would make a uſeful impreſſion on the minds of my countrymen.*" What impreſſion this performance has made on the minds of the people in Scotland, I have not been particularly informed. If it has made the ſame impreſſion on the minds of the people there which it has on the minds of ſome of the people of this country, it muſt be grateful indeed to the court of Great-Britain, and at the ſame time have ful-

ly anſwered the intention of the author, which ſeems to have been no other than to alarm the minds of the people, and to guard them againſt the principles of all free and equal governments.

The method which Mr. Robiſon takes to effect his object is worthy of notice. He expatiates on thoſe parts of the conduct of the French which, from the repreſentations of their enemies, appear to be the moſt wanton and cruel, and which, by his own ſtatement, appear to be no leſs abhorrent from the *principles* of the French Revolution, than they are from that of America. By his own repreſentation of the ſtate of things in France, the people there had much greater reaſon to attempt a Revolution, than we had in America at the time we began ours. In the courſe of the Revolution there is no doubt but that things have taken place in France at which humanity muſt ſhudder. But this does not affect the *principles* of the Revolution; nor does it afford any evidence that a Revolution was not abſolutely neceſſary there, as well as in America; nor yet, that Revolutions in ſome other governments ought not to be attempted, nor that ſucceſs to ſuch attempts ought not to be devoutly wiſhed for.

If to ſubvert a government where *the King is an abſolute monarch, and the people are ſlaves—where there is little elſe to be ſeen in the eſtabliſhed religion of the nation but ſuperſtition*

and falſehood, and the greateſt degree of oppreſſion in Church and State, as Mr. Robiſon himſelf concedes was the caſe in France; if this is a "Conſpiracy againſt all the Religions and Governments of Europe," and one of the worſt effects of Illumination, the Deſpots of that country, and their tools throughout the world, indeed may tremble, but the people at large may rejoice, in hope that *their* redemption is drawing near.

It is, I believe, from the artful manner in which Mr. Robiſon has blended the ſentiments of particular men, and ſometimes particular bodies of men, with the principles of the Revolution, that his Book has derived the principal part of its reputation in the world. Stripped of this one ſupport, it will, as I conceive, appear to be but little more than a *baſeleſs viſion*, or the mere *ſhadow of a ſhade*.

Nearly the ſame obſervations will apply to what he ſays of *Free Maſons*, *Illuminati*, &c. I know nothing of this new order of men (if ſuch an order does exiſt) but what I have acquired from reading his Book. That there are, and have been from time immemorial, ſecret ſocieties in Germany, and in other parts of the world, who have met together, ſome for mercantile, ſome for literary, ſome for political, ſome for religious, and ſome for other purpoſes, there can be no doubt. In almoſt all ſocieties, eſpecially ſuch as are numerous, it would be ſtrange indeed if there were not

ſome bad men; not only ſo, but bad men of various deſcriptions. This has been the caſe even in the pureſt Chriſtian Churches; and that in the pureſt times of Chriſtianity. But this has never been conſidered by Chriſtians (although it has been urged by Infidels) as a fair and concluſive argument againſt Chriſtianity. Nor ought it to be conſidered as an argument of the leaſt weight; but rather as the conſcious want of argument on the part of thoſe who uſe it. No more ought it to have weight when urged againſt any other order or deſcription of men. Mr. Robiſon will not admit its force when uſed by the Illuminati againſt thoſe corrupt and oppreſſive eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhments which have, for a long time, exiſted in many parts of Europe; although it is the principal weapon which he has attempted to wield againſt them, and againſt *Independents*.

In p. 46, 47, we have a ſpecimen of the mode of reaſoning which Mr. Robiſon purſues throughout his Book. *Voltaire* is there ſaid to have been "guilty of the meaneſt and vileſt tricks" with his bookſellers, and *Diderot* of having cheated the Empreſs of Ruſſia out of a large ſum of money by the ſale of a library which he did not poſſeſs.—Several private letters and papers are mentioned, which were written by certain members of the Aſſociation, and which contain ſome things which every friend of man and true morality

muſt commend; ſuch as, *diſapprobation of deſpotiſm, of excluſive and hereditary rights, of eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhments, of prieſtcraft and ſuperſtition,—a regard for liberty of conſcience, general benevolence, and the equal rights of men.* In thoſe writings, there are alſo ſome things which ſeem to be chimerical, and others which ſavor of deiſm and immorality. But they are all equally and alike reprobated by Mr. Robiſon. But whether they are good or bad, it does not appear that principles of this kind are peculiar to the aſſociations and lodges which he deſcribes; nor that any of thoſe which are immoral, or which ſavor of infidelity, are eſſential to them. Doctor Weiſhaupt, it ſeems, had been guilty of fornication with the widow of his brother, or with ſome other woman who ſtood in a ſimilar relation to him. At the conſequences of this criminal intercourſe, he appears to have been greatly diſtreſſed, and to have contemplated the means of procuring an abortion. From his letter, p. 130, it appears that he diſcovered his ſituation to ſome of his moſt confidential friends, particularly to Hertel: but it does not appear that any one of the Order could be induced, either to juſtify his conduct, or to aid his wicked deſign of procuring an abortion. This certainly does not afford the moſt ſtriking evidence of a univerſal, and uncommon degree of depraved morals among the members of the Aſſociation. Yet this is one of the moſt

ſtriking inſtances, and one on which Mr. Robiſon ſeems chiefly to rely for evidence of the impious principles of the Order in general, and of their pernicious influence on ſociety. The only perſon who could be induced to intermeddle in this ſhameful affair, ſeems to have been a Clergyman of the eſtabliſhed religion of the place." "*The good Biſhop* of Freyſengen," as Mr. Robiſon ſtyles him, "knowing the cogent reaſons, procured the diſpenſation, and Sparticus was obliged, like another dim-ſighted mortal, to marry her."

Although it is principally, if not altogether, from the ſentiments of individuals, and from particular inſtances of immorality, that Mr. Robiſon ſupports his accuſations againſt the Illuminati in general (and inſtances of this kind, in p. 345, he enumerates no leſs than eight) yet, as I juſt now obſerved, this kind of reaſoning is of no weight with him, but is rather conſidered as a ſpecimen of their dangerous art and ſophiſtry, when employed againſt the cauſe which he has eſpouſed; and that, let the facts, by his own conceſſion, be ever ſo glaring, and the practice ever ſo common. P. 326, 327, he ſays, "They take care to ſupport theſe aſſertions by *facts*, which to our great ſhame, and *greater misfortune*, are but too numerous."

Although it would furniſh no concluſive evidence for, or againſt, Deſpotiſm, or Free Government, yet, if we were furniſhed with

an accurate liſt of all the inſtances of infidelity that have appeared from Lord Herbert, down to Thomas Paine, and of all the inſtances of peculation, fraud, fornication, adultery, inceſt, &c. which have taken place in the world during that time, it might be amuſing to ſome to make the calculation, and to ſee on which ſide the inſtances are the moſt numerous, whether on the ſide of thoſe who have advocated the cauſe of Deſpotiſm in Church and State, or of thoſe who have oppoſed it in both? I believe the friends of Liberty throughout the world might ſafely put their cauſe to this, if it ſhould be found to be a fair, iſſue.

It does not appear that Mr. Robiſon has any undue prejudices againſt any particular denomination of Chriſtians, unleſs it be againſt *Independents*. I do not find from any thing contained in his Book, but that he eſteems the Roman Catholic Religion, the Proteſtant, the Preſbyterian, and the Epiſcopal, as all equally good in themſelves, and ſalutary in their influence, provided they are incorporated with the Government by a *Civil Eſtabliſhment*. Between "*no Religion*, and *no Civil Eſtabliſhment*," there ſeems, in his opinion, to be no difference. (See p. 370.)

It is matter of bitter complaint againſt the Illuminati, that two of their members *propoſed* to avail themſelves of the influence of the women. He ſays, p. 190, "There is noth-

ing in the whole conſtitution of the Illuminati that ſtrikes me with more horror than the *propoſals* of Hercules and Minos to enliſt the women in this ſhocking warfare with all that is good," &c. Yet in the practice of this kind of policy, he is very far indeed from falling behind the foremoſt of them. Witneſs his long diſſertation on women, from p. 191 to 211 incluſive, and his pathetic addreſs to them, p. 349 and on.

It is alſo matter of grievous complaint with Mr. Robiſon againſt the Illuminati, that they preſume, in ſecret lodges, to diſcuſs ſubjects relating to the State and the Church: And to render the truth of this accuſation the more probable, in p. 78, he, very inadvertently, aſſigns the reaſon for this part of their conduct, namely, *That it is not ſafe for them to do it in any other way.* He ſays, "Thoſe who are under continual checks in open ſociety, feel this emancipation in thoſe hidden ſocieties, and indulge with eagerneſs in the expreſſion of ſentiments which in public they muſt ſmother in their own breaſt."—"There is no country in Europe where this kind of enjoyment is ſo poignant as in Germany." It appears from Mr. Robiſon's own ſtatement here, that it is abſolutely neceſſary for theſe ſocieties, either to meet in ſecret for the purpoſe of converſing freely on ſubjects, either of Religion or Civil Government, or elſe to remain ſilent about them. The latter, he ſuppoſes, ought to be maintained. And

to break through ſuch reſtraints is, in his opinion, to conſpire "againſt all the Religions and Governments of Europe."

I know nothing of the ſecrets of Free Maſonry, nor do I ever expect to know them: Nor am I, from any thing contained in Mr. Robiſon's Book, at all alarmed at their "*frivolities.*"

That there have been Infidels in all ages of the world—that there have been men of licentious principles and immoral conduct in moſt ſocieties that were conſiderably numerous—that obſcene, irreligious, and deiſtical writings have abounded, and do ſtill abound, was known, and lamented by all good men, long before Mr. Robiſon publiſhed his "Proofs of a Conſpiracy againſt all the Religions and Governments of Europe."

Mr. Robiſon's ideas of *General Benevolence*, and what is called *Philanthropy*, or the Love of Mankind, are worthy of particular notice. This, which has uſually been conſidered as a virtuous and commendable affection, Mr. Robiſon conſiders throughout his Book, as the radical error (if it will bear ſo mild a term) of the Illuminati, and as the abominable principle on which their impious and deteſted ſyſtem is grounded. And indeed, this is a principle palpably inconſiſtent with that kind of *Patriotiſm* which he recommends, and is in its nature, wholly repugnant to all that Deſpotiſm in Church and State which he, with ſo much

ardor, labors to defend. P. 347, 348, he ſays, "We may alſo gather from what we have ſeen, that all declamations on *univerſal philanthropy* are dangerous. Their natural and immediate effect on the mind is to increaſe the diſcontents of the unfortunate, and thoſe in the laborious ranks of life."—"Surely it muſt be unkind to put ſuch men continually in mind of a ſtate in which they might be at their eaſe."—"Such declamations naturally tend to cauſe men to make light of the obligations and duties of *common Patriotiſm*, becauſe theſe are repreſented as ſubordinate and inferior to the great and more noble affection of *univerſal benevolence*." This, I am ſenſible, is no more than a juſt inference from poſitions which, throughout his Book, he labors to eſtabliſh as the groundwork of that ſyſtem of government which he contends for, and which does, in its nature, exclude every noble and generous principle from the human mind.

Mr. Robiſon cenſures the Illuminati with great bitterneſs, and ſeems to be exceedingly alarmed at the licentious and abſurd notions which they entertain of a future ſtate of things in which, "by making men good, by enlightening their minds, by finding employment for every talent, and by placing every talent in its proper ſphere of action," they expect *a ſteady and juſt morality will be produced that will govern the world;* the conſequence of which will be, that *Princes and ſubordination*

of rank among men will be done away as unneceſſary and uſeleſs things. See p. 92, 104, 124, 162, 336, and elſewhere throughout his Book.

I know it to have been, for a long time, a favorite ſentiment with ſome of our eminent Divines, who are among the greateſt admirers of Mr. Robiſon's Proofs, that in the *Millennium*, Civil Government of every deſcription will be done away, and the whole world of mankind will be governed by principles of *General and Pure Benevolence*, which they conſider as the ſame with *Juſt and Pure Morality*. This ſeems to be carrying the idea further than Mr. Robiſon repreſents the Illuminati to do. This idea, I confeſs, whether of the Illuminati, or of thoſe eminent Divines, I conſider as in ſome meaſure chimerical. I have very little doubt, but that, the more univerſally the principles of *pure morality* and *general benevolence* prevail, the more firm, energetic, equal, and mild, will Civil Government be.

I find nothing, even in the ſecret correſpondence of the Aſſociation or any of its members, which ſuggeſts an idea of any thing like inſurrection, or an attempt by force of arms, to effect a revolution, or a reformation of thoſe intolerable oppreſſions which Mr. Robiſon admits were exerciſed both in Church and State, previous to the Revolution. The means propoſed, according to his repreſenta-

tion, were no other than *mere inſtruction, and perſuaſive influence.*

My buſineſs here is neither to juſtify, nor to condemn, either the Germans or the French. I wiſh only to vindicate the true and liberal principles of our own Government againſt thoſe unreaſonable prejudices which a certain deſcription of men are laboring to excite, from a conſideration, either of the real, or imaginary conduct and crimes of other nations. Admitting the principles and practice of thoſe men who are called *Illuminati*, to be ever ſo corrupt, what is that to us? Are we to give up all rational liberty, and involve ourſelves in war, either becauſe bad men who are oppreſſed and enſlaved in ſome other parts of the world, wiſh to be free; or becauſe, in their attempts to extirpate Deſpotiſm, they go to the oppoſite extreme? This is the improvement which ſome would make of all the extravagancies attending the French Revolution, and of all the abſurd and traiterous ideas (whether real or imaginary) which have been imputed to the Illuminati and the German Union.

There are ſeveral things in Mr. Robiſon's Book which I find it difficult for me to reconcile. When I conſider the extraordinary caution with which he repreſents the Illuminati to proceed in the admiſſion of members, even to the lower grades of the Order—the long courſe of trial which muſt be undergone,

and which laſts for ſeveral years, and the ſlow and gradual ſteps by which the pupil is led on, till they have thoroughly ſounded his genius, and diſcovered his natural diſpoſition and particular turn of mind; when I conſider all this, as deſcribed by him, p. 94 and on, I am at a loſs to conceive how it happened, that Profeſſor Robiſon, being a ſtranger in that country, and poſſeſſing the moſt pure and unblemiſhed moral character—without any previous examination, without any of this long trial, and without having given any reaſon to *ſuſpect* his loyalty to his Prince, and his inviolable attachment to the Religions and Governments which, as he repreſents, it was the great, and the ultimate object of the Aſſociation to deſtroy,—that he, under theſe circumſtances, ſhould at once be admitted to the ſuperior degree of a *Scotch Knight*, and have committed to him, "at midnight, by a *worthy Brother*,"* a box, containing the *Rituals*, *Cat-*

* I am at a loſs to determine whether the terms, "*Worthy Brother*," are here to be taken in an *ironical*, or in a *literal* ſenſe. It can hardly be ſuppoſed that they are here uſed *ironically*, to expreſs contempt and ſcorn; becauſe this Ruſſian ſeems to be a Gentleman with whom the Profeſſor, when in that country, had formed an intimate acquaintance, and ten years afterwards, when he found him in Edinburgh, "*wiſhed to make a proper return for much civility and kindneſs which he had received from him in his own country.*" If, on the contrary, they are to be taken *literally*, to expreſs real worthineſs of character and particular reſpect, we are ſtill at a loſs to determine what it is which, in the eſtimation of Mr. Robiſon, conſtitutes that worthineſs; whether the *delivery of the Box at midnight*, or his *abſconding and carrying off the funds entruſted to him by the Empreſs*, or the *civilities ſhewn to the Profeſſor at Peterſburgh*; or, whether it is all theſe particular parts of his conduct taken collectively? Theſe particular incidents compriſe all the information which Mr. Robiſon has given us of this Stranger. (See Proofs, p. 9.)

echiſms, and other important ſecrets of the Fraternity.

Again. When, at one time, his immediate object is to excite an alarm, the Illuminati are repreſented as being *exceedingly numerous and powerful—as having almoſt the entire control of the printing and bookſelling buſineſs in Germany—as having nearly all the Reviewers under their influence—as ſuppreſſing, or giving currency, at their pleaſure, to all publications—as ſurrounding Princes with their councils—as filling up eccleſiaſtical dignities by their influence—placing their members as tutors to young Princes and Youth of diſtinction—inſinuating themſelves into all public offices, courts of Juſtice, and Univerſities.* At another time, as in p. 176, when he has a different object in view, he repreſents them as low, mean, and inſignificant characters. He ſays, "We don't know many of them; few of thoſe we know were in the upper ranks of life; and I can ſee that it required much wheedling, and many letters of long worded German compliments from the proud Sparticus, to win even a young Baron, or a Gaf juſt come of age." In p. 245, he ſays, "The German Union appears a mean and precipitate Aſſociation. The centre, the archives, and the Secretary are contemptible. All the archives that were found were the plans and liſts of the members and a parcel of letters of correſpondence. The correſpondence and other buſineſs was managed by an

old man in ſome very inferior office of judicatory, who lived at bed and board in Bahrdt's houſe for about ſix ſhillings a week, having a cheſt of papers, and a writing deſk in the corner of the common room of the houſe." In p. 248, he ſays, "This is all the direct information I can pick up of the Founder and proceeding of the German Union. The project is coarſe and palpably mean, aiming at the dahlers of entry money and of annual contribution and at the publication and profitable ſale of Bahrdt's books." Here the object of the Aſſociation ſeems to be greatly changed from that which is ſet forth in the title-page, unleſs indeed, *the dahlers of entry money and profitable ſale of Bahrdt's books* is "A Conſpiracy againſt all the Religions and Governments of Europe."

It is hard to conceive how ſuch *mean and obſcure men*, while they continue to be of that deſcription, ſhould, at the ſame time, have ſuch extenſive influence, and fill ſo many of the *moſt important offices and places of public truſt* in Germany. If ſuch an Aſſociation does, in fact, exiſt; whether it is ſo numerous and formidable as to give juſt occaſion for general alarm, or ſo obſcure and inſignificant, as to be almoſt unworthy of notice; from the account Mr. Robiſon has given of it, I am quite unable to determine. We ſeem to have his authority for both. Theſe are ſome of the myſterious things contained in Profeſſor Rob-

iſon's Book, which it is difficult for me to reconcile. His Eulogiſts, probably, can do it to their own ſatisfaction, provided it is found to anſwer the end deſigned by its publication.

I do not recollect ever to have met with a publication that diſcovered the author to poſſeſs ſo much uſeful and polite literature, and that appeared ſo ſpecious at the firſt glance, which, on a more accurate attention, is found ſo completely to confute itſelf, as does that from which the foregoing extracts are taken. There is reaſon however to hope that this publication will anſwer a purpoſe, though different from, yet not leſs important than that which was originally intended by it. The leading ſentiments, and ultimate object of the author being clearly underſtood, the avidity with which his Book has been received, the zeal with which it has been commended, and the aſſiduity with which it has been circulated, muſt evince to the world, without the leaſt ambiguity or reaſonable doubt, the real ſentiments, and the ultimate objects of a numerous, and very influential claſs of men in the United States. Theſe ſentiments unreſtrained, and a ſyſtem of meaſures correſponding with them, muſt, in the nature of things, eventually effect their objects, which now appear to be no other, than arbitrary power, eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhments, and privileged orders in America. If theſe ſentiments and objects are juſt and ſalutary, it is for the

people, by open and free converſation, and eſpecially by their ſuffrages from time to time, to countenance and ſupport them. If on the other hand, they are in their nature, fatal to the happineſs and the equal rights of men, it is ſtill for the people in the ſame peaceable and Conſtitutional way, to check their influence before the object is effected, when it will be too late to attempt it.

Mr. Robiſon is lengthy in his performance, conſidering the quantity of pertinent matter contained in it. He has ſome good moral ſentiments interſperſed, here and there in his Book, and a number of clever obſervations, particularly in his diſſertation on women. I believe the foregoing extracts contain the ſubſtance of all that may, with any propriety, be conſidered as "Proofs." They are not ſcraps of ſentences which partially convey the ideas of the author; but they expreſs the general principles and ſentiments on which the whole of that information which he has offered to the public, will be found, when carefully conſidered, to depend for its ſupport. I believe I have not miſquoted, and hope that I have not, in any inſtance, miſrepreſented his meaning. If this has been done, it has been without deſign. More numerous quotations might have been made; but this muſt have been to uſe vain repetitions, rather than to anſwer any valuable end.

In the courſe of theſe obſervations, I have not had occaſion to recur to a great variety of foreign documents: Mr. Robiſon himſelf has furniſhed internal evidence abundantly ſufficient to refute all his *Proofs of a Conſpiracy againſt Civil Government and Religion in general.*

If I have made wrong quotations, or, in any inſtance, miſrepreſented the meaning of the learned Author, or done, in any reſpect whatever, injuſtice to his ſentiments, I am willing to be corrected; and if it ſhould be with ſeverity, I believe I ſhall not complain. Fair play is ſaid to be a *Jewel.* It is what I admire in others, and wiſh for myſelf never to be found in the violation of any of its ſacred demands.

It is not from a reluctance in the writer againſt being known, but from a conſciouſneſs that his name would add nothing to the weight of the foregoing remarks, that inſtead of his real, he has choſen to ſubſcribe the fictitious, name of

CORNELIUS.

Maſſachuſetts, Dec. 1798.

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N. B. The name of the writer is left with the Printer, who will communicate the ſame to any perſon who may wiſh to be informed of it.

ERRATA.

Page 4. line 12. for, *drowned herſelf*, read, *was drowned.*
P. 5. line 5 from the bottom, after, *all*, read, *the.*
P. 6. line 1. for *and*, read *a.*